

Lawrence, Jr., and Caroline Long Kimmel House
1331 2nd Avenue
Fourth Ward Neighborhood
Altoona
Blair County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5826

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

LAWRENCE, JR., AND CAROLINE LONG KIMMEL HOUSE

HABS No. PA-5826

Location: 1331 2nd Avenue

Date of Erection: ca. 1890

Architects: Beezer Brothers

Description: The Kimmel house is unusual for the Fourth Ward in two important ways: it is much larger than the neighboring homes, and it represents an architectural style widely popular in Altoona but for its time almost absent from this part of the city.

Even at this level of architectural stylization, the Kimmel House is still constructed with a wood frame and brick veneer. In the French-influenced late Victorian style often called Queen Anne, it features a complex shape and roof line with a strong vertical thrust. The steeply hipped roof has a lower cross gable with projecting square bay at left, a hexagonal tower with faceted cone top at the corner, and a gabled bay at the back of the side facade. Tall chimneys at each side of the house carry the eye upward due to the vertical reeding in the brickwork and the extra-tall height of the one at the right.

The interior features a central entrance space with a parlor and hearth to each side, a sharp winder stair behind the tower, a dining room, and a kitchen. Fairly modest oak woodwork has been painted over, but unusually tall interior doors and tiled fireplaces with original gas fixtures survive intact. Upstairs, the section below the main hipped roof is unfinished.

The brick porch is a replacement for an earlier and smaller porch with large turned columns. It was built by one of Kimmel's children who simply wanted a bigger porch. The front door is also replaced, and the brick veneer was recently repointed.

History: This impressive brick house, built for Lawrence Kimmel, Jr., was designed by the architectural team of Michael and Louis Beezer and is pictured in their 1893 catalogue. The house is still occupied by Kimmel's children and grandchildren. It is one of the few largely intact survivors of the Beezer's early urban Queen Anne style structures, and one of two Beezer houses within the survey area.

Tax books and the Beezer catalogue indicate that the house was built in 1893, although deed records show that Kimmel purchased this property, a full 50' x 120' lot, from John A. Wright's executors on January 11, 1894, for \$1,200. The house went up immediately, if it was not built before the final deed was drawn. In 1893, when the family lived at 1422 4th Ave., Kimmel (b. 1858) already had a successful grocery and general merchandise business at 1400 6th Ave. By 1896-97 Kimmel was resident at the current address; by 1904-05 he had a telephone installed both at his work address and his home.

Kimmel's fortunes soon changed, however. In 1906-07 his store was no longer mentioned in the directory. By 1912 he was working as a warehouseman for Fay, Hutchinson & Company, a wholesale grocer, and three of his children were employed at the Altoona Silk Mills. At various times Kimmel was a "laborer" or an employee of the silk mill with most of his children. Family members report that his business failed and that the children worked in part to help pay for and maintain this large and impressive house. Genevieve (Kimmel) Curry lived in this home with her husband James Curry, a boilermaker, and other family members.

Sources: Maps: 1882, 1894. Deed books: 99/372, 515/533. City directories. Tax assessment records. Interview with family members. 1893 Beezer catalogue.

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Project Information: This report was part of a larger project to document the city of Altoona, Pennsylvania. The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), Robert Kapsch, chief, at the request of America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), Randy Cooley, director. Overviews of the history of the city (HABS No. PA-5784) and the fourth ward neighborhood (HABS No. PA-5786) provide context for these buildings as well as a comprehensive list of sources. See also additional HABS reports on buildings in the city and other neighborhoods.

This report was prepared by Susan Garfinkel in the summer of 1989 under the supervision of HABS senior historian Alison K. Hoagland and Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian. Garfinkel's and other project historians' work was published as Railroad City: Four Historic Neighborhoods in Altoona, Pennsylvania (Washington, D.C.: HABS/HAER, National Park Service, 1990), edited by Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian, and Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian.